

LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010

Introduction

Today's public library serves as both a resource and a gateway to the exciting and complex world of information. Librarians not only provide answers, they serve as navigators and trainers; they guide and educate people in the selection, evaluation and use of information found on the Internet, in online databases and on the library's shelves.

Although the Internet has transformed many aspects of library services, traditional public library roles and services are still important. Many people look to the library for recreational reading, continuing education and personal enrichment. Circulation continues to increase, with tremendous growth in borrowing of books and materials in new formats like CDs, DVDs and MP3s. The library also holds a special place in neighborhoods as a venue for a variety of public programs, from story times and book discussions to cultural and recreational presentations; as a gathering place for friends and neighbors; and as a meeting place for community groups. The library's long commitment to literacy is evident in its strong literacy program which pairs adult learners with volunteer tutors and with Leon County's GED program.

The LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System currently has a main library, five branches, a bookmobile and related outreach services and an "Internet Branch" online. The main library and branches complement each other and allow the library system to provide patrons with information ranging from in-depth treatment of subjects to ready reference and current best-sellers. Materials are shared system wide through an efficient delivery system.

Developed with input from the community and library staff, the *Strategic Plan 2005-2010* combines the knowledge and guidance of citizens with the professional expertise and experience of library staff. Together they envision a future in which the library system's collections, programs, services and staff:

- Inspire and nurture a love of reading;
- Develop and support the community;
- Enable Leon County residents to live a life of learning; and
- Serve as the community's powerhouse of information.

Planning Process

A planning process for public libraries, *The New Planning for Results* (American Library Association, 2001), was the framework for the development of the strategic plan. *The New Planning for Results* methodology was built on three basic assumptions:

1. Excellence must be defined locally; it results when library services match community needs, interests, and priorities.
2. Excellence is possible for both small and large libraries; it rests more on commitment than on unlimited resources.
3. Excellence is a moving target; even when achieved, excellence must be continually maintained.

This method acknowledges that there is no national standard for exceptional library service. Just as each community is unique, each library is unique in how it can best meet its community's needs.

This strategic plan is based on work by the planning committee with significant community and library staff input. Members of the community shared their comments and ideas via a web-based survey in March 2004; on-site exit surveys conducted in May 2004; three community focus groups and one focus group session with the Library Advisory Board, all conducted in August 2004; and via submissions to the suggestion boxes in all library locations and the online suggestion form available on the library system's web site (cumulated continuously throughout the year). The entire library staff was encouraged to provide input throughout the planning process.

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Vision

Our community discovers the joy of reading, the energy of ideas and the power of information together in the library.

Mission

The LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library System enriches the community by inspiring a love of reading, providing a dynamic resource for creative and intellectual pursuits, and enabling residents to live a life of learning.

Strategic Directions

I. Inspire and Nurture a Love of Reading

The public library is our community's champion for reading. The library appreciates the importance of emergent literacy and assists parents and caregivers in understanding the impact of language and learning from birth. The library encourages parents to read to children, children to become independent recreational readers, and adults to value reading as essential to individual growth and enrichment and as one of the most enjoyable forms of recreation.

Goal 1: Parents, caregivers and child care professionals understand the importance of learning and language in children's development starting at birth.

Objective 1.1 Provide educational materials to parent and caregiver participants of Baby Time and Story Time programs; ongoing.

Objective 1.2 Market Baby Time and Story Time to in-home day care providers.

Goal 2: Infants, toddlers and preschoolers develop early literacy skills and appreciation for books and reading.

Objective 2.1. Increase the reach of Baby Time programs by expanding the program to include every library system location by September 2009.

Objective 2.2 Provide Baby Time and Story Time programs at all locations on a weekly basis by September 2009.

Objective 2.3 Increase community awareness of the importance of reading in the intellectual and emotional development of children aged 0-5 by promoting Baby Time, Story Time and similar library programs, increasing media promotions of the programs by two per year beginning January 2005.

Goal 3: The library provides a safe place and learning activities for children after school.

Objective 3.1 Increase participation in "Families Connect @ the Library" programs by 2% annually beginning October 2004.

Objective 3.2. Increase interest in learning by providing 2 intergenerational programs per site per year.

Goal 4: Residents of all ages locate and borrow relevant, timely materials to read and participate in reading-related activities year round.

Objective 4.1 Increase the use of books, audio books, magazines and other library materials by 2% annually.

Objective 4.2 Increase participation in book discussion groups, author events and related activities by 2% annually.

Objective 4.3 Each year, 2% more students will maintain and build their reading skills during the summer by increasing participation in the Florida Library Youth Program.

II. Develop and Support Our Community

The library is a valued community gathering place. Its resources, involvement, and leadership in the community are extended through partnerships with community members, other county and city departments, businesses, institutions, organizations, and agencies.

Goal 1: Citizens value the library as a comfortable, easy to use, neutral public space for reading and study, meeting and interacting with others, and participating in forums and programs.

Objective 1.1 Improve the library system's facilities to ensure usability, accessibility and comfort.

Objective 1.2 Increase library visits by 2% annually.

Goal 2: Citizens access local information that enables them to participate in the community using local resources.

Objective 2.1 Develop and maintain a collection of information resources particular to and helpful to citizens of Leon County.

Objective 2.2 Build partnerships with one government, educational, not-for-profit, civic or social service organization each year, beginning October 2004.

Objective 2.3 Co-sponsor at least one forum or educational event per year beginning January 2005.

Goal 3: The library anticipates and responds to the information needs of individuals starting a business and/or investigating a career as well as the business and economic development community at large.

Objective 3.1 Build collections to support small business development and career choice; ongoing.

Objective 3.2 All reference librarians receive training in business reference skills and resources at least once yearly beginning in January 2005.

Objective 3.3 Package and market the resources of the small business center and related services and collections.

III. Living a Life of Learning

The library is an essential source of knowledge for the community, providing educational resources for all ages and pursuits. The library supports early reading readiness, formal and alternative education, and life-long learning. A variety of materials, electronic resources, and dynamic programs are provided to help address Leon County residents' desires for self-directed growth and development. Literacy training for individuals and families develops and supports reading, language and parenting skills.

Goal 1: Library users develop and hone information literacy and computer skills at the library.

Objective 1.1 Guidance and instruction in information literacy is offered on the library's web site as well as in brochures, signs and finding aids and in person throughout the library system, beginning October 2005.

Objective 1.3 Continue to offer computer classes and adapt curricula to changes in technology; ongoing.

Objective 1.3 Every librarian is a teacher/navigator who receives training in the use of electronic resources at least once a year in addition to specific training in the use of every new database.

Goal 2: School age children have meaningful connections with the library.

Objective 2.1 Encourage Leon County Schools to include the library card on the lists of school supplies distributed each year, beginning August 2007.

Objective 2.2 Collections, programs and services designed for specific age groups and interest levels, including homeschoolers, are available at all library locations; ongoing.

Objective 2.3 Develop partnerships with one school each year to provide a comprehensive support base for students; includes coordination of summer reading list and activities, curriculum based projects and pertinent library collections, services and programs; annually beginning August 2007.

Goal 3: Adult learners have access to educational opportunities to improve their basic literacy levels, English-speaking abilities and family literacy skills. Participants receive instruction in reading, writing, and comprehension skills to improve their earning ability, increase opportunities for furthering their education, enhance their ability to participate in the life of the community, and improve the well being of their families. The program offers a learning environment with specialized materials and access to trained tutors.

Objective 3.1 Continue to develop a network with collaborators and community partners to ensure that all adults who seek literacy program services receive appropriate educational opportunities; ongoing.

Objective 3.2 Develop flexible training modules and volunteer opportunities to meet diverse needs of both volunteers and adult learners by August 2006.

Objective 3.3 Increase participation and learner persistence in program tutoring sessions, workshops and program-sponsored social events by 2% annually.

IV. Valued as the Community's Powerhouse of Information

The library provides easy access to accurate and reliable information. It is a dynamic resource that assists Leon County residents with school, work, creative ventures and life decisions. Well-trained, customer-based staff assists the public with their information needs through print, non-print and online resources covering a wide range of topics. Information services are provided in person, via telephone, fax, e-mail and the Internet. Popular, timely materials are provided in various formats and in sufficient quantities.

Goal 1. Library resources and services are readily accessible, efficient and easy to use, both inside and outside library facilities.

Objective 1.1 Improve services for library users who manage their library accounts online, developing an average of one new or upgraded service each year.

Objective 1.2 Expand self-service options, including self checkout and automated reservations for in-library computer use by September 2005.

Objective 1.3 By January 2006, investigate implementing a search database program that will provide results from varied information sources through a single catalog query.

Objective 1.4 Redesign the library web site to create a more intuitive, user-friendly environment by September 2005.

Goal 2. Reference services meet the continuously changing information needs of the community.

Objective 2.1 Continue to develop a powerhouse of online reference services and virtual collections by identifying, acquiring and marketing appropriate resources; ongoing.

Objective 2.2 Market online subscription databases as reliable, accurate, current and relevant in meeting library users' information needs, beginning January 2005 and ongoing.

Objective 2.3 Investigate the feasibility of installing wireless network in existing library facilities by January 2006.

Objective 2.4 The library will continue its participation in the collaborative statewide Ask a Librarian service; ongoing.

Goal 3: Continue to develop a robust collection which meets a wide variety of interests in the community.

Objective 3.1 Continue to provide materials in a variety of formats at all locations as they become available; ongoing.

Objective 3.2 Investigate the development of virtual collections of downloadable content as it becomes available through changes in technology; ongoing.

Objective 3.3 Expedite patron access to requested titles by purchasing sufficient quantities in a timely manner and continue to process those materials within two days; ongoing.

Objective 3.4 Analyze circulation data by format and subject area annually to ensure that the varieties of formats and materials wanted by patrons are being provided.

Goal 4: Residents will value the public library and find it relevant to their lives.

Objective 4.1 Every employee champions the library. They are conversant on the mission, values and services of the library and share this information in business, social and recreational settings.

Objective 4.2 Through networking and partnerships, the library will reach out to people where they are – neighborhood associations, community events and festivals, health care centers, child and social service agencies, recreation centers, senior centers, schools – to promote the library and encourage library card registration.

Objective 4.3 Marketing and promotion of popular fiction and new current non-fiction will be increased through displays in the libraries and alternative locations.

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